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ABSTRACT

Six class activities for 16 advanced students of English as a Second Language that used videotape recording are described. All are designed to improve pronunciation and general listening and speech skills, and all use videotaping and classroom and home playback for peer and self-assessment. The activities involve: (1) oral interpretation of jokes, humorous sayings, and stories; (2) role playing and impromptu dialogues; (3) brainstorming and debate; (4) creation of commercials; (5) transcription of news reporting and preparation of a news broadcast; and (6) transcription of an English narrative told by a friend. The activities are designed to reduce inhibitions about speaking in English, provide practice in improvising in English in real-life situations, teach use of persuasion and information-giving, promote creativity, and integrate listening, reading, and writing in English. One student's narrative is included. (MSE)

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Advanced Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation Video Demonstration

Sharon Osburg

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Advanced Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation Video Demonstration

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Background: The following activities were used with 16 advanced learners of American English as a second language. Most students expressed their desire to speak accentless English as a primary goal. Because research suggests that learning a second language after age twelve indicates you probably will speak it with an accent, the class emphasis was shifted to the more practical goal of changing and improving those qualities of each individual's pronunciation which might interfere with clear communication. Activities arose from interactive discourse. Assessment and evaluation of student performance was almost instantaneous since these activities were videotaped and reviewed. The class met twice a week for 2 hours.

Textbook: Grant, L. (1993). *Well Said:Advanced English Pronunciation*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Overall Objectives: The improvement of speech intelligibility and communication skills in academic, business, scientific, professional and other relevant settings through interactive, collaborative activities.

Methods: Speaking activities were videotaped. Each individual's performance was then observed through playbacks in the classroom. Tapes could also be taken home for personal assessment. The camcorder was operated by students in most cases, more rarely, by the instructor.

1. Breaking the Ice—Oral interpretation of jokes, humorous sayings and stories

This activity accustoms students to being videotaped, and to watching and listening to themselves and each other, on taped playbacks, using American English. Students also get used to operating the camcorder. The challenge of telling a joke or a story with the aim of getting a laugh or at least a smile of recognition intrigues many students as they get used to being taped while speaking English in front of a group. Some students were so interested in doing this that they demanded a second chance. The jokes and stories were selected by the instructor because they involved puns or other language which depends on correct pronunciation to be funny.

Aims: Gradually, students lose some of their inhibitions about speaking English publicly. The activity also promotes creativity since there are many aspects of body language, and the suprasegmentals of stress and emphasis which come into play in telling a joke.

Procedures and Materials: readings were taken from the following sources.

Byrne, R. (1986). *The Third and Possibly the Best 637 Best Things Anybody Ever Said.* New York: Fawcett Crest

Moulton, P. (1942). *Best Jokes For All Occasions.* New York: Permabooks

Thurber, J. (1939). *Fables For Our Time.* New York: Harper & Row

Rosenbloom, J. (1987). *Giggles Gags & Groaners* New York: Sterling.

Novak, W. & Waldoks, M. (1990). *The Big Book of New American Humor.* New York: Harper Collins

2. Role Play/Impromptu Dialogues

This activity offers students the opportunity to improvise speaking English in relevant natural discourse. Students practice improvising with a purpose in preparing for the filming of these role-plays. They learn to be assertive, firmly insisting on their own needs. They practice being diplomatic. They often correct or monitor themselves, but still are able to continue speaking without embarrassment as is usual in conversations. All the components of interactive, natural language is involved in role plays because the language arises from the empathy of the students for the role they play. Since the situations were videotaped, students tended to become more creative, often performing an improvised playlet complete with pantomime and props.

Aim: provides students the opportunity to practice improvising in English in a realistic situation that they might actually face in life. Promotes self confidence when students view themselves making an error yet correcting it and continuing with conversation.

Procedures and Materials: students are given a list of role play situations involving two people. Five such situations are given in the textbook, *Well Said.* Students were allowed to practice their improvised skit for one class period. Some students practiced outside of class time to be better prepared for being videotaped. Taping and playback of the videos involved two class periods with this small class.

3. A Debate

A debate involves students in a collaborative speaking and listening exercise. Brainstorming is involved. Students are encouraged to approach this activity armed with reason (rules of debate) and research. an attempt was made to involve all the students by making each student responsible for facts and ideas. Videotaping the debate lends a more serious tone to the procedure. Viewing the videotape allows students to determine who "wins" the debate.

Aim: to provide a collaborative learning experience involving persuasion and the importance of giving information on a topic. Gives students the chance to focus on what they want to say and how to make that understood. Armed with notes, facts and research, students can lose their self-consciousness in speaking English as they concentrate on communicating the point of view they believe in and the response they will receive.

Procedures and Materials:

Two days are spent on the debate. Current editions of periodicals such as Time and Newsweek are helpful to have in the classroom for student research. The debate topic is presented as a proposition, such as, "All guns should be banned unless they are used by the police." One day is spent in preparation and filling out a worksheet * with the following format.

Our main points:	Examples or proof
Questions they may ask us	Answers we could give
Their probable points	Weakness in their points
Questions we may ask them	Answers they may give

Students use the magazines and the worksheet to prepare for the debate on the second day when it is videotaped.

*Wong, M. (1994). *Advanced Listening/Speaking Projects & Activities*. California: El Camino

4. Video Commercials

Before working on this activity students can view commercials from television which the instructor tapes or can view programs about commercials such as, *Your Favorite Commercials*, which aired in March, 1994. The viewing is followed by a class discussion of the characteristics of an effective commercial. Students are encouraged to fantasize that they actually work for an advertising agency or television studio.

Aim: Creativity is encouraged in a potentially real situation. Much serendipity arises out of finding solutions to problems one might actually face in a studio or agency. My students reinvented *cue cards*, for example. Another student invented a product and created a logo with brand related products on her computer.

Procedures and Materials: Students are given the following directions for making their own commercial.

You will create a commercial of your own to be videotaped. The commercial should be about 3-4 minutes long—no shorter than 1 minute—so you can practice clear English pronunciation.

1. Create a serious or funny imaginary product or service.
2. Write a script for a commercial for the product/service in English.
3. Use props or visuals. Think about what will look effective on television.
4. Use persuasive language and strategies.
5. If more than one person is working on the commercial, make sure both people have speaking parts so everyone gets practice speaking.
6. Rehearse. Practice speaking clearly.

Remember: The ideal product for a commercial enterprise (one which makes a lot of money) is said to be some thing or some service needed daily by every man, woman and child. This imaginary thing or service does no harm, is totally necessary, and wears-out every half hour, and so must be purchased again and again. Does such an advertiser/businessman's dream product or service exist? How will you make a commercial for it?

5. Newstalk

This activity is meant to complement making commercials and gives students practice hearing, speaking, and transcribing American English as it is used in a newsbroadcast.

Aim: Students have the opportunity to listen and transcribe English as it is actually spoken. They quickly begin to perceive the difference between standard written English and spoken English in a professional register. Students are motivated to practice speaking English in this context.

Procedures and Materials: Students taperecord then transcribe the American English they hear on news radio or television broadcasts in order to prepare a script for a news broadcast for their

commercials. Later, in the videotaping, students assume the role of a "talking head" in their make-believe broadcast. Students should only attempt to transcribe 3-5 minutes of news. See directions for transcribing oral narratives which follows.

6. Oral Narrative Assignment

Students are instructed to ask a friend or acquaintance who is a fluent English speaker to tell them a story. They will need to use a reliable audio taperecorder to tape the narration and they need to avoid background noise and other distractions. Since they will later transcribe the entire narrative, they should encourage the friend to tell the story in 3-7 minutes—certainly, no more than 10 minutes. The story must be told in English. Students are reminded not to transcribe in their own language and translate into English.

Aim: this assignment involves students in a language experience integrating listening, writing, reading and speaking. Students are encouraged to see this activity as research in cultural anthropology.

Procedures and Materials: All work except the actual videotaping of each story is done outside class. Students are given the following instructions.

Taping

1. Ask your narrator to tell you a story about a time in his/her life when he/she was in danger or was afraid of being harmed. You might say: "Were you ever afraid you might be hurt or wouldn't make it out of a situation?" or "When, in your life, were you most afraid that you would be hurt or even die?"
2. Encourage your subject to stick with the story and to finish within 5-7 minutes.
3. Try to say little since you must transcribe your own comments too.

Transcribing

1. Play back your taped story when you can be alone and concentrate. Use head phones if possible.
2. Transcribe the story roughly in pencil at first. You will have to rewind several times to take down the entire story. Don't think about separating into sentences or "chunks" of ideas at this time.
3. Type the finished story.
4. Break the narrative into chunks of meaning, ideas, or sentences. Number each sentence or thought. Use the model narrative, *3 Times An Angel*, to help you.
5. Show pauses using...
6. If the narrator takes a breath, indicate by typing—[breath-in]
7. Show emphasis, sentence focus or stress by underlining.

Video Recording

On the day of videotaping turn in your typed narrative to the instructor. We will video tape your presentation of the narrative.

Don't Prejudge Anyone

Oral Narrative told to Kyung Hee Yi—April, 1994

When I was driving through
...um South Central L.A.
one evening with my wife
I forgot why we were there
but this incident happened about a year ago
...um my wife and I were in South Central L.A
well, we we're driving down a street
...I forgot what street
...we got into an accident
It was a major accident...uh...
my wife was seriously injured and was bleeding heavily
someone had called 911
and told us...um...the ambulance was on its way
as I said, my wife was bleeding badly...
...and...because she had bled a lot she got chilly
I was very worried about her
I was slightly injured as well...but...
I was still was unable to move much
...um some people pulled my wife and I out of the car
and [breath-in] we were sitting on the sidewalk
...um the ambulance took a while to get to us
as we were sitting there...on the street
a crowd started to form
...more and more people...uh...started to gather around us
...um as I said before, we were in South Central L.A.
well...I haven't heard a lot of good things about South Central L.A.
uh I've heard about gangs
and drive by shootings and some things like that occurring in South Central L.A.
well...you know...South Central L.A. is not the safest place to be
as my wife and I were sitting there...um on the sidewalk...
...uh...difference faces started to appear
um...I naturally got scared
you know, my wife and I were both injured
and the only thing that crossed my mind at that point was...
um...these people were going to hurt us

these people got closer and closer ...um...to us
so...I got really scared...
...but these people came over to us to help
uh...one man came over to cover my wife...uh...with his jacket
...and said, "Don't worry, the ambulance will be here soon"
these people there...that night were courteous and...generous
...and ...they really wanted to help us
so...I misjudged people that night
just...because we were in South Central L.A....
and it became too dark...um...and
I have heard many bad things about...the city that
...well... I automatically assumed that
everyone in this neighborhood was...
a bad boy and a gangster...
so...I was mistaken that night
but I learned a valuable lesson that night
um...not to prejudge anyone
well...to finish the story
the ambulance finally arrived
and we were taken to the emergency room
so we are doing well now
so...I am very thankful to the people...um...who helped us that night